Remnants of a noun class system in Bezen (Southern-Jukunoid)

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Abstract
Bezen looks like a typical Benue-Congo noun class language: A rich variety of prefixes adorn its nouns. Contrary to the linguist’s expectation, the agreement system does not reflect the high number of nominal prefixes but is reduced to four classes: One singular and three plural classes. The function of the nominal prefixes is not restricted to number-marking, however. They also serve to derive a large array of nouns from verbs and adjectives.

Zusammenfassung

1. Introduction
Bezen nouns have the typical appearance of Benue-Congo nouns, having a prefix and a root, with one set of prefixes marking singular, the other plural. The prefixes have the form CV- or V-; C can be represented by /k/ or /b/; V having the form /a/, /i/, /e/, /o/, or /u/. The root prototypically has the form CVC, but there are also roots bearing the form CV or VC. In the latter case, a consonant loss might be responsible for the syllable-structure. More complex roots, as CVCCVC, CVCVC, or CV.CV are assumed to be the result of compounding or associative constructions.

2. Nominal Prefixes

2.1. Morphophonemic processes
Many nouns show a qualitative coherence of the nominal prefix and the root vowel as a result of assimilatory processes that may operate in both directions across morpheme boundaries. That means that in some cases, the prefix vowel can trigger a phonetic change of the root vowel and in other cases, the root vowel triggers an allophonic change of the prefix. And sometimes, the change of a prefix vowel just cannot be explained anymore.

2.1.1. Allomorphy of nominal prefixes
Regressive assimilatory processes, in which the quality of the nominal root vowel influences the prefix vowel, lead to a high allomorphic variety of the latter. One possible assimilation pattern is presented in Table 1, where V represents the plural prefix. While an /a/ in the root triggers an a- as the plural prefix

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1 /e/, /o/ and /u/ have the free variants /ɛ/, /ɔ/ and /ʊ/, respectively. The examples in this paper represent the phonetic realization of Bezen lexemes and utterances.
morpheme, the unrounded vowels /ɨ/ or /i/ lead to an ɛ- as the plural morpheme. A rounded vowel /u/ in the root triggers the prefix vowel o-. This pattern occurs also occurs with bV- and kV- prefixes. However, it is not universal, and there are many examples that do not show assimilation.

Table 1: Allomorphy of nominal prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Vowel</th>
<th>Prefix Root</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>a- / C( _)</td>
<td>kizá / àzá</td>
<td>winnowing tray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>ɛ- / C( _)</td>
<td>kídur / èdùr</td>
<td>sausage tree (Kigelia Africana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>o- / C( _)</td>
<td>kikur / òkùr</td>
<td>end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The nominal prefixes additionally show a variation of the prefix vowels /u/ ~ /o/ and /i/ ~ /ɛ/, which will be considered as allophonic in the following, but is not triggered by the quality of the root vowel. Prischnegg (2008: 133), who noticed the same phenomenon in Yukuben, proposes that the variation is the result of an assimilatory process, where the underlying prefix vowel /u/ or /i/ merges with a root-initial vowel /a/ / è/. However, it is difficult to provide an evidence for such an explanation in Bezen, as there are very few vowel-initial nominal roots left in this language. Shimizu (1980b) also recognizes the variant oo- of the noun class prefix u- in Yukuben, but he does not explain the variation and considers it as an allomorphic phenomenon. Shimizu’s reconstructions of Proto-Jukunoid nominal roots and the classes they belonged to (1980b, 1980c) might give a hint to the former class membership of Bezen nouns. Anyhow, in time lexemes might change their class belonging and sometimes different lexical roots are used in Bezen instead of the reconstructed PJ-roots. Thus, the number of corresponding cognates in an original class is quite small. A final explanation for the variation of these prefix vowels cannot be provided here.

2.1.2. Allophonic variation of the root vowel

Furthermore, in many lexemes an allophonic variation of the root vowel can be observed. Depending on the roundedness of the prefix vowel, the root vowel /i/ might change to its allophones /ɛ/, /ɛ/ or /u/, respectively, as shown in Table 2. Rounded prefix vowels trigger the realization /u/ of the root vowel, palatalized root-initial consonants trigger the realization /ɛ/, whereas unrounded prefix vowels do not have an effect on the root vowel. This process might also be triggered by bV- and kV- prefixes.

Table 2: Allophonic variation of nominal root vowel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Root Vowel</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>[u</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/u</td>
<td>V_[round]C (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/y</td>
<td>V_[round]Y (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/ì</td>
<td>V_[round]C (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/ì</td>
<td>V_[round]Y (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/i/</td>
<td>/ì</td>
<td>Y_[round]C (C)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just as with the processes that have been described before, not all nouns adhere to this assimilation patterns and there are many exceptions.

Corresponding SG and PL prefixes bear the same tone in most cases, Therefore, it must be concluded that the prefix tone is prescribed by the tonal value of the root. However, the variety of tonal patterns of the nouns does not allow a conclusion about how exactly the tone of the root influences the prefix tone.
### 2.2. Singular / Plural pairings

Bezen lacks an elaborate agreement system, and the agreement markers that are left can often be used interchangeably. Therefore, a sharp division of noun classes is not possible anymore. Thus, the singular/plural pairings will be presented before an elaboration of the agreement system, which will be dealt with in chapter 3. The combination of several SG/PL pairs into one group is partly based on formal criteria as the assimilatory phenomena described above. Furthermore, the Bezen prefixes have been compared with Proto-Benue-Congo (De Wolf 1971) and Proto-Jukunoid (Shimizu 1980a; 1980b) reconstructions. In few cases, a semantic grouping of nouns can be observed with one SG/PL pair, human beings for example are often denoted by nouns bearing û-~ o-/~ b\text{-}V- prefixes, while animals prefer i-~ \varepsilon-~/b\text{-}V-.

#### 2.2.1. \( u- \sim o-~/bā- \sim bo- \)

Six nouns combine the singular prefix \( u- \sim o- \) which bears a mid- or low-tone with a \( ba- \) plural prefix. Five of the nouns denote human beings (1) – (3) or animals (4) and (5). The lexeme \( ītār \) ‘garment’, which also allows the plural prefix \( i- \), is a semantic exception within this set of nouns. It is not clear why lexemes (1) – (4) have an \( o- \) prefix, while (5) has an \( u- \) in the SG. Shimizu (1980b: 172) reconstructs a class \( u-~/bā- \) noun root \( *ngIT \) ‘person’, which seems to be a cognate of the Bezen lexeme.

1. ŏkîb / bākîb woman
2. ŏlîm / bālîm man
3. ŏpî / bāpî person
4. ŏkûn / bākûn antelope
5. ūwāk / bāwāk chimpanzee

#### 2.2.2. \( u- \sim o-~/bɛ- \)

Further nouns that denote human beings appear within the prefixes \( u-~/bɛ- \), as in (6) – (8).

6. ūpî / bēpî slave
7. ūdîñ / bēdîñ chief
8. ūlîm / bēlîm child

Other nouns within this group denote inanimate objects (9), (10).

9. ūtîk / bētîk steep place
10. ūkûn / bēkûn horn

It is arguable, whether a separate group \( u-~/bɛ- \) is justified or whether these prefixes should be considered as a part of the \( u-~/bā- ~/bo- \) group. One evidence for a joined \( u-~/bā- ~/bo- ~/bɛ- \) group would be the lexeme \( ūpî \) ‘slave’, for which a class \( u-~/bā- \) PJ-root \( *pyî \) has been reconstructed by Shimizu (1980b: 10). Considering examples (6) – (8), one could argue that the \( bɛ- \) PL-prefix is a result of regressive assimilation to an unrounded close front- or central-vowel. However, the nouns in (1) – (3) show the same vowels in the root, but bear a \( ba- \) PL prefix, for which there is no obvious explanation. Therefore, two different groups have been established here.

#### 2.2.3. \( i- \sim \varepsilon-~/bā- \sim bo- \)

In Bezen, many nouns denoting animals have the prefix \( i- \sim \varepsilon- \) in the singular and \( bā- \sim bō- \) prefix in the plural (11) – (15). The quality of the plural prefix vowel is affected by the roundeness of the root.
vowel, resulting in bò-, when the root vowel is rounded (11) – (12) and in bà- when it is unrounded (13) – (15). ìkázhim / bà- ‘spider’ is an exception within this group of nouns, bearing a mid-tone prefix.

(11) ikùr / bòkùr  crocodile
(12) isín / bòsùn  fowl
(13) ihìr / bàhìr  helmeted guinea fowl
(14) ikàr / bàkàr  baboon
(15) ikàháŋ / bàkàháŋ  bushfowl

<12> A set of nouns denoting animals have ë- / bà- as prefixes, among them èmàn ‘goat’, èm ‘hippo’ and èër ‘buffalo’. A comparison with the closely related languages Yukuben and Kuteb shows that the latter two nouns have lost a root initial glide /y/ in Bezen. Regressive assimilatory processes have led to a lowering of the SG prefix ì to ë- and a change of the root vowel in the plural, triggered by the bà- prefix (16). Why èmàn ‘goat’ decided to take ë- as its SG prefix, is not clear.

(16) Bezen  Yukuben  Kuteb
èëm / bààm  ìyìm / bëyìm  iyém / iyém  hippo
(Prischnegg 2008: 142)  (Koops 2009: 277)
èër / ìyà / bààr  ìyà / bòyà  iyàg / iyäg  buffalo
(Prischnegg 2008: 141)  (Koops 2009: 99)

<13> Five relational nouns bear the prefixes i- / ba- ~ bo- with mid-tones in (17) – (19), the lexemes ìrâ / bàrâ ‘friend’ and ímbàr / bámbàr ‘sibling’ being the only examples with a L-tone or a H-tone.

(17) íwàn / bòwàn  husband
(18) íwù / bòwù  wife
(19) ízìn / bòzùn  child/young animals

2.2.4.  ì- ~ ì- / bë- ~ bë-

<14> Several nouns that denote animals and humans bear the prefixes ì- ~ ì- / bë- ~ bë- (20) – (25).

(20) igbìr / bègbìr  dog
(21) íkìyàm / bèkìyàm  horse
(22) íkìyn / bèkìyn  guest
(23) íyì / bèyì  in-law
(24) ímbìyìr / bëmìbyìr  mother-in-law
(25) ìtìfn / bètìfn  parent

Here again, it is arguable, whether it would make more sense to combine the two prefix groups ì- ~ ì- / bë- ~ bë- to one, as both groups contain nouns denoting animates. However, considering a joined group, there would be no plausible explanation, why in some cases the plural prefix vowel is /a/, but in others /e/, as both vowels co-occur with unrounded root vowels.

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3 This rule also applies to the prefixes with a mid- or high-tone.
2.2.5. Single prefix \textit{ba-}

Several nouns denoting abstract concepts (26) and (27), transnumerals, which can refer to singular or plural objects (28) and (29), and fluids (30), take a \textit{ba-} prefix.

\begin{itemize}
  \item (26) \textit{bátiŋ} thought
  \item (27) \textit{băgān} struggle
  \item (28) \textit{bātsī} mane
  \item (29) \textit{bāwān} farm house roof
  \item (30) \textit{bătōk} wine
\end{itemize}

2.2.6. Single prefix \textit{bi- ~ be-}

Other abstract nouns (31) and (32) transnumerals (33) and (34) and fluids (35) and (36) take the prefixes \textit{bi- ~ be-}. Nouns denoting fluids appear exclusively with mid- and high-tone prefixes.

\begin{itemize}
  \item (31) \textit{bēŋmām} laziness
  \item (32) \textit{bēēn} whistling
  \item (33) \textit{bīkpōŋ} forehead
  \item (34) \textit{bīmām} bushy end of a tail
  \item (35) \textit{bēsīm} corn beer
  \item (36) \textit{bīmī} Water
\end{itemize}

Two ethnonyms are found with the L-tone prefix \textit{bi-} (37) and (38).

\begin{itemize}
  \item (37) \textit{bīmām} Nser
  \item (38) \textit{bīlāŋ} Furu-Bana
\end{itemize}

2.2.7. Single prefix \textit{bu- ~ bo-}

Further mass nouns (39) and (40) and abstracts (41) and (42) bear the prefix \textit{bu- ~ bo-}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item (39) \textit{bōmbūtū} grass sp.
  \item (40) \textit{būhyūb} gravel
  \item (41) \textit{būmīn} wisdom
  \item (42) \textit{būhyūm} illness
\end{itemize}

One could consider a joint grouping of the five prefixes \textit{ba-}, \textit{bi- ~ be-} and \textit{bu- ~ bo-} as they appear with nouns bearing the same semantic content. Even though there is a tendency of rounded root vowels triggering rounded prefix vowels, not all nouns adhere to this assimilatory pattern, as in (30) – (33) and (41). For this reason, the three groups are kept apart.

2.2.8. \textit{u- ~ o- / i- ~ e-}

Nouns with a mid- or high tone SG prefix \textit{u-} take almost exclusively the PL prefix \textit{i-} (43) – (47).

\begin{itemize}
  \item (43) \textit{ūkūŋ / īkūŋ} edge
  \item (44) \textit{ūsīn / īsīn} hair
  \item (45) \textit{ūzī / īzī} broom
  \item (46) \textit{ūsān / īsān} farm
  \item (47) \textit{ūyāk / īyāk} stirring stick
\end{itemize}
A part of the nouns has the mid- or high-tone variants ə-/e- as number marking prefixes (48) – (51).

(48) əkūn / ēkūn  firewood
(49) òtʃi / ëtʃi  tree
(50) ɔŋk / ēŋk  flute
(51) əmĭn / ēmĭn  raw one

Furthermore, three nouns take the L-tone prefixes ù- / i- (52) – (54). The lexeme ùhyūn ‘boundary’ (53) allows bɛ̄- as alternative PL-prefix and ùtâr ‘garment’ (54) accepts the alternative bâ-.

(52) əŋbɨ̀ / ìŋbɨ̀  lid
(53) ùhyūn / ìhyūn  boundary
(54) ùtâr / ìtâr  garment

A remarkable number of nouns denoting elongated objects is found within this group of nouns, as in the examples (45), (47) – (50) and (53).

2.2.9. Single prefix ī- ~ ī- ~ ē- ~ ē-

The prefixes ī- ~ ē- occur with mid and high tones in transnumerals (55) and (56) mass nouns (57) and (58) and nouns that denote abstract concepts (59) and (60).

(55) īkūk  mushroom
(56) īfârák  anthill
(57) ūʃi  soil
(58) Õkūn  sorghum
(59) Õryēn  dream
(60) Õyēyēn  truth

2.2.10. ki- / a- ~ o- ~ ɛ-

The SG prefix ki- appears with a low, mid or high tone and combines with a tonally fitting PL prefix a- ~ o- ~ ɛ-. The vowel of the plural prefix is dependent on the quality of the nominal root vowel. While an /a/ in the root leads to a- as plural prefix (61) and (62), a rounded root vowel /u/ prescribes the plural prefix o- (63) and (64) and any other unrounded vowel as /i/ or /i/ leads to an ɛ- plural prefix (65) and (66).

(61) kīgār / āgār  forest
(62) kībâr / ābâr  bag
(63) kīhūr / əhūr  hole
(64) kīkūr / əkūr  bundle
(65) kīhyūŋ / əhyūŋ  drum
(66) kīʃi / əʃi  head

Even though the majority of the nouns adhere to this assimilation pattern, there are also exceptions: Some nouns combine a rounded root vowel with an unrounded plural prefix (67) and (68) or the other way around (69). kîzîn allows the alternative plural form ɛzîn in all three meanings.

(67) kîfûk / ēfûk  banana flower
(68) kîkūn / ākūn  crowd
2.2.11. Single prefix a-

A set of transnumerals and abstract nouns appears with an a-prefix, bearing either a L, M, or H-tone (70) – (75). Two lexemes that denote human beings show an ā-prefix without a fitting plural form: āyā ‘mother’, and ābā ‘father’.

(70) āfūk lungs
(71) āmbwār immature groundnuts
(72) āṭfi medicine
(73) āfī laughter
(74) ātā pepper
(75) ākūn palm chaff

2.2.12. kà- ~ kā- / kù- ~ kò- ~ kō-

There are three nouns denoting inanimates that bear the prefix kà- ~ kā- in the SG and kù- ~ kò- ~ kō- in the PL (76) – (78). The examples are too few to allow a conclusion regarding the direction of assimilation in (77) and (78), but the long vowels in both nouns indicate a consonant loss.

(76) kàkāŋ / kòkāŋ cap
(77) kàätàk / kùútùk calabash
(78) kāār / kɔ ̄ ɔ ̄ r canoe

2.2.13. ka- ~ ke- / a-

A small number of nouns bears the prefix ka- ~ ke- in the singular and an a-prefix in the plural. The quality of the SG prefix vowel is again dependent on the root vowel of the noun: While /a/ as root vowel triggers ka- as SG-prefix (79) and (80) any other root vowel as /u/, /ɛ/, /i/ or /i/ will trigger ke- (81) – (84).

(79) kāsām / āsām peeling
(80) kāwāb / āwāb small bag for hunting equipment
(81) kēkūn / ākūn stone for sharpening
(82) kērēn / ārēn small basket for sifting
(83) kēnni / ānni gong
(84) kēbī / ābī circumcision knife

2.2.14. Single prefix ka-

Several transnumerals (85) – (88) and a noun that denotes an abstract concept (88) bear the prefix ka-.

(85) kādār bark cloth
(86) kāāŋ rock
(87) kāzāk tree (sp.)
(88) kāām rainy season
2.2.15.  **ku- ~ ko- / a- ~ o-**

A set of nouns appears with the SG prefix *ku- ~ ko-* and the PL prefix *a-* (89) – (94).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(89)</td>
<td>kọtì / atì</td>
<td>bow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(90)</td>
<td>kòkùn / åkùn</td>
<td>cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(91)</td>
<td>kùmàn / àmàn</td>
<td>grasshopper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(92)</td>
<td>kùgbàn / ågbàn</td>
<td>lizard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(93)</td>
<td>kòkùŋ / ákùŋ</td>
<td>sugarcane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(94)</td>
<td>kòbì / ábì</td>
<td>palm frond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In two cases the plural prefix *a-* seems to be assimilated to the rounded root vowel and has the shape *o-* (95) and (96).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(95)</td>
<td>kùbù / öbù</td>
<td>arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(96)</td>
<td>kùgün / ögün</td>
<td>leg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.16.  **kù- / ī-**

Three nouns show the number-prefix pairing *kù- / ī-* (97) – (99).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(97)</td>
<td>kùnàŋ / inàŋ</td>
<td>cheek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>kùwñ / íwñ</td>
<td>song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(99)</td>
<td>kùyú / ìyí</td>
<td>year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.17.  **kù- / bɛ-**

This prefix pair is found in only one lexeme *kùlfì* ‘cotton’.

2.2.18.  **bì- / bu- ~ bo-**

Lexemes with *bì-* as SG prefix might take *bu- ~ bo-* in the PL (100) – (105).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>bikpök / bókpök</td>
<td>kidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(101)</td>
<td>bikpök / bùkpök</td>
<td>frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(102)</td>
<td>bìdàŋ / bùdàŋ</td>
<td>chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(103)</td>
<td>bìkàn / bùkàn</td>
<td>axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(104)</td>
<td>bìhyìn / bùhyìn</td>
<td>cocoyam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(105)</td>
<td>bìnàm / bùnàm</td>
<td>tree (sp.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.19.  **bì- ~ bì- / ī- ~ í-**

In three cases the pairing *bì- ~ bì- / ī- ~ í-* can be observed, for example in (106) – (108).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(106)</td>
<td>bìzì / ízì</td>
<td>animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(107)</td>
<td>bìzìm / ízìm</td>
<td>intestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(108)</td>
<td>bísìr / ísìr</td>
<td>caterpillar; maggot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.20.  **bù- / bì- ~ bɛ-**

Two nouns appear with *bù-* as the singular prefix and *bì- ~ bɛ-* in the plural (109) and (110).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(109)</td>
<td>bùpök / bòpök</td>
<td>kidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(110)</td>
<td>bùkàn / bùkàn</td>
<td>axe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.21.  bū- / ī-
<35> The singular prefix bū- combines with the plural prefix ī- in būlāk ‘palm oil tree’.

2.2.22.  Loanwords and neologisms
<36> Loanwords in Bezen originate from Hausa (111) – (115) and Jukun (116). These nouns alert attention because of their mostly missing noun prefix in the singular. Bezen speakers integrate these nouns into their nominal number system by adding a bō- ~ bō- prefix in the plural. àlémő ‘orange’ in (114) has a Bezen atypical SG-prefix a-, which is not dropped in the PL. The Bezen might have borrowed the lexeme from Hausa or Jukun, together with the additional phonological material. The prefix ī- of ītábā ‘tobacco’ in (115) could be of Bezen origin, as there is an array of Bezen lexemes bearing this prefix in the SG. It is the only loanword bearing the plural prefix bē-.

(111) górò / bōgórò  colanut  
(112) kúlɛ / bōkúlɛ  cat  
(113) tásā / bōtásā  iron pot  
(114) àlémő / bōlémő  orange  
(115) ītábā / bētábā  tobacco  
(116) lōŋ / bōlōŋ  trousers

Neologisms are treated just as loanwords: a bō- prefix is added in the PL. bākwā is a newly created lexeme to designate a short type of bananas, which grow in the area of the Bakuri people in South-western Cameroon.

3. Noun Class System
<37> Bezen differentiates four different agreement classes: one singular and three plural classes. In the singular, all nouns trigger the agreement prefix u~ o~, bearing a mid- or high tone. In the plural, three different agreement markers, i~ e~, ba~ be~ bo~, and a~ with the same tonal values as in the SG are found4 (Table 3). The quality of the vowels is dependent on the target’s root vowel and will be discussed in the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>for all nouns</th>
<th>u~ o~</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLi</td>
<td>for non-humans and inanimates</td>
<td>i~ e~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLii</td>
<td>for humans and inanimates</td>
<td>ba~ be~ bo~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLiii</td>
<td>for ållf ‘days’</td>
<td>a~</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3:  Agreement morphemes

<38> In the SG all nouns trigger the agreement marker u~ o~ in adjectives, numerals, and demonstratives (117) – (120). Agreement is furthermore found with interrogative adjectives. As that is more elaborated and deviates from agreement with the other three targets, it will be explained in detail in the according chapter.

4 A larger number of gender categories in plural than in the singular seems to be typologically exceptional. Greenberg (1968: 95) states in his universal nr. 37 that “a language never has more gender categories in non-singular numbers than in the singular”. This atypical situation in Bezen is a result of the decline of its noun classes.
Considering the plural, the picture becomes more blurred. Whereas nouns denoting human beings prefer a $bV$-prefix (121) and (122), all other nouns vary in their usage of the two plural agreement prefixes (123) – (125). Assuming semantic agreement, non-humans would not allow $bV$-agreement, but they sometimes do, as in (124). Formally motivated agreement would mean that nouns that have a $bV$-plural prefix trigger $bV$-agreement, which is also not always the case (125). That means that agreement in Bezen has to be learned together with the noun. However, the speakers allow for variation and often disagree among each other upon the “right” agreement marker. A learner of Bezen would be on the safe side to use $bV$-agreement with humans, and nouns that carry a $bV$-plural prefix and $i$- with all other nouns.

(121) $bākīb \ bā-kyũr$
PL.women PLii-small
small women

(122) $bāmbār \ bē-wũŋ$
PL.siblings PLii-other
other siblings

(123) $iṣān \ ĩ-lākār \ ĩ-tũr$
PL.farm PLi-big PLi-three
three big farms

(124) $iilik \ bē-yĩ$
PL.rope PLii-new
new ropes

(125) $bõhũr \ ĩ-nānĩnĩ$
PL.hook PLi-those (not visible)
those hooks
3.1. Agreement with adjectives

Bezen has a relatively small set of adjectives that refer to the color, age, or quality of objects or people. The most prominent ones are lákàr ‘big’, màn ‘red’, rì ‘good’ and bì ‘bad’. The agreement marker ú-~ó is the same for all singular head nouns: In (126), lákàr ‘big’ refers to a human being and in (127) bì ‘bad’ to an inanimate entity.

(126) ōɲū Ṽ-lákàr
SG.person SG-big
big person

(127) íkpáb ó-bì
TR.money SG-bad
bad money

In the plural, three different agreement morphemes can be observed: bV-, i- ~ e- and a-. Whereas the agreement marker a- only occurs with the pluralic noun alla ‘days’, the other two morphemes are evenly distributed with the overall number of Bezen nouns. However, no clear-cut distinction of classes can be made, as one noun might take different agreement morphemes with different adjectives, or take one agreement morpheme for adjectives and another for demonstratives. Certain is that nouns denoting human beings take the agreement marker bV- with all adjectives (128) – (130).

(128) bápí bá-bì
PL.person PL-ii-bad
bad people

(129) bëdinya bë-wùŋ
PL.chiefs PL-ii-other
other chiefs

(130) bámbär bá-rè
PL.siblings PL-ii-good
good siblings

Non-humans take the i- or the bV- prefix in the plural. The adjective wùŋ ‘other’ plays an exceptional role, as many nouns might take i- as agreement morpheme with all adjectives but wùŋ, which would take bV- instead. These nouns do not necessarily have a bV- plural prefix or are animated, as in (131) – (134).

(131) íɲí ē-kyir
PL.mouths PL-ii-small
small mouths

(132) íɲí bë-wùŋ
PL.mouths PL-ii-other
other mouths

(133) ēkùn i-lákàr
PL.firewood PL-ii-big
big firewood

(134) ēkùn bë-wùŋ
PL.firewood PL-ii-other
other firewood
However, there are also nouns that strictly take the agreement marker \(i\). These nouns tend to have a \(KV\)-SG-prefix (135) – (138).

(135) ĕɲín ū-kyîr
   PL.scars PL.i-small
   small scars

(136) ĕɲín ū-wúŋ
   PL.scars PL.i-other
   other scars

(137) ākûn ū-làkàr
   PL.cups PL.i-big
   big cups

(138) ākûn ū-wúŋ
   PL.cups PL.i-other
   other cups

The noun bòhôr ‘hooks’ (SG bêhêr) takes \(i\)-agreement with all adjectives in the plural, disregarding its \(bV\)-SG and PL-prefixes.

The variation of the agreement morphemes \(u\)-~ \(o\)-, \(i\)-~ \(e\)- and \(b\)-~ \(b\)- depends on the quality of the target’s root vowel. An /a/ in the root of the adjective triggers the agreement prefixes \(u\)- in the SG and \(b\)- and \(i\)- in the PL (139), whereas a root containing the vowel /\(u\)/ leads to the prefixes \(u\), \(b\)- and \(i\)- (140). The vowels /\(i\)/ and /\(e\)/ trigger the prefixes \(o\), \(e\), and \(b\)- respectively (141) and (142). Here, the \(ba\)-plural prefix might indicate an ancient adjective-initial vowel /\(a\)/ which results in \(o\)- and \(e\)- when meeting the prefixes \(u\)- and \(i\)-. Whereas in the \(u\)-, \(i\), \(ba\)- set, the \(ba\)-prefix might be the result of regressive assimilation to the root vowel of the adjective.

(139a) ūdûŋ ūlàkàr b) bêdûŋ bàlàkàr c) bòhôr ilàkàr
       SG.chief SG-big PL.chiefs PL.i-big PL.hooks PL.i-big
       big chief big chiefs big hooks

(140a) bûdâŋ ū-wûŋ b) bûdâŋ bê-wûŋ c) bàkâr î-wûŋ
       SG.chair SG-other PL.chairs PL.i-other PL.baboons PL.i-other
       other chair other chairs other baboons

(141a) ūlîm ū-kyîr b) bêlîm bà-kyîr c) âtîn ê-kyîr
       SG.child SG-small PL.children PL.i-small PL.mortars PL.i-small
       small child small children small mortars

(142a) îmbâr ôbì b) bàmbâr bà-bì c) bàkâr ëbì
       SG.sibling SG-bad PL.siblings PL.i-bad PL.baboons PL.i-bad
       bad sibling bad siblings bad baboons

3.2. Agreement with numerals

The Bezen numeral system is quintesimal, that is all numerals from six to nine are expressed through compounds based on 5. The agreement morphemes are \(o\)- in òyônô ‘one’ and \(i\)- ~ \(e\)-, \(bV\)- or \(a\)- in the plural and are marked on both numerals in case of compounds. òyônô ‘one’ is identical in combination with all nouns (143) and (144), the numbers above take different agreement markers dependent on the
head noun of the phrase (145) – (148). The vowel of $bV$ is prescribed by the root vowel of the numeral: it is /a/ when the root vowel is /a/ as in bátár ‘three’ (147), /e/ if the root contains the unrounded vowel /i/ as in bɛ̄ɲ ‘four’, and /o/ if the root vowel is rounded as /o/ as in bōtsōŋ ‘five’ (147). éēn ‘two’ is an exception, as here a mutual interference of the prefix and the root vowel can be observed, resulting in báān with a $bV$-prefix (145) and (146).

(143) **kibār**  ó-yùnì
SG.bag  SG-one
one bag

(144) **ōlĩm**  ó-yùnì
SG.man  SG-one
one man

(145) **àbār**  é-ēn
PL.bags  PLi-two
two bags

(146) **bālĩm**  bá-ān
PL.men  PLi-two
two men

(147) **bālĩm**  bō-tsōŋ  bá-tār
PL.men  PLi-five  PLi-three
eight men

(148) **ãtʃāŋ**  ī-tsōŋ  ī-tār
PL.houses  PLi-five  PLi-three
eight houses

The numerals above ten are expressed through phrases (149) and (151) – (153) or nouns (150). However, the numeral roots never appear in their bare form: They are always accompanied by a prefix, as in (149). Here, éēn ‘two’ does not agree with any constituent in the noun phrase so that it might be plausible to establish a basic form of the numerals 2–5 that contains the PLi-prefix. Likewise, óyùnì ‘one’ never appears without the ó-prefix. Kèkím ‘twenty’ has a plural form ākìmb which is used in the formation of numerals of forty and more. In (152), an assimilation process seems to be responsible for the agreement prefix ā- in áān, as in the next example, ītār ‘three’ is bearing the prefix ī- instead of an expected a-(153).

(149) **bālĩm**  kūwúb  ōgbũ  é-ēn
PL.men  SG.ten  pass.FACT$^5$
two
dezven men

(150) **bānį**  kèkīṃ
PL.people  SG.twenty
twenty people

(151) **bālĩm**  kèkĩm  ōgbũ  ó-yùnì
PL.men  SG.twenty  pass. FACT  SG-one
twenty-one men

$^5$ The factative is an aspect form that denotes an action that can have taken place in the past or in the present, depending on the situation. The factative is marked by a mid- or high-tone on the verbal root and a mid- or high tone on the vocalic prefix.
3.3. Agreement with demonstrative pronouns

Bezen has a set of demonstrative pronouns that shows the same agreement pattern as adjectives and numerals. The demonstrative pronoun nānɨ́ denotes an object or a person that is close to the speaker. The tonally modified nânɨ́ refers to an object that is further away from the speaker, but visible, whereas nânɨ́nɨ́ indicates an object that is not visible for the speaker (154) – (156)\(^6\). The agreement remains constant with all three targets and is û- in the singular and î- or bê- in the plural. Example (155) shows a noun denoting a human being, bearing kl- / à- prefixes, which is rather unusual. The agreement is formally motivated, as the targets bear the î- agreement marker. These three examples illustrate how disintegrated the Bezen agreement system really is. Whereas in (154) both, animacy and formality could play a role in triggering the bV- agreement prefix, in (155), agreement is formally motivated and in (156), formality does not play a role and the noun triggers PLi agreement, disregarding its bV- plural prefix.

(154a) èmîn û-nâni
SG.goat SG-this
this goat

(155a) àndâb î-nâni
PL.young. women PLi-those
those young women

(156a) bûtsû́k ú-nâni
SG.banana SG-that
that banana

3.4. Agreement with interrogative adjectives

The interrogative adjectives mâŋ ‘how many?’ and rîŋ ‘which? / who?’ show agreement which is more elaborated than agreement with adjectives, numerals and demonstratives. Furthermore, the same adjectival stem is used to derive different question adjectives, as shown in the following.

3.4.1. mâŋ ‘how many?’ / ‘how much?’

For the question adjective mâŋ ‘how many?’, three different categories of nouns have to be differentiated: human/non-human and non-countable. Additionally to that, the word āllé ‘days’ has its own agreement morpheme. Nouns denoting non-humans are referred to by the prefix î- (157) and those denoting human beings by the prefix bá- (158). While in (157) àwû úmâŋ ‘of them how many?’ is a NP with an attributively used question adjective, in (158) the interrogative adjective refers anaphorically to afore mentioned human beings. Nouns denoting non-countable entities, or transnumerals, trigger the agreement marker kà- (159). This agreement marker only appears with the question adjective mâŋ and does

\(^6\) All three demonstrative pronouns might be used ad- and pronominally.
not occur with adjectives, numerals and demonstratives. The agreement morpheme *a*- only occurs with the lexeme *āllī* ‘days’ and is consistent with all targets (160)

(157) \( w-ōkū \ \āwū \ \ī-māŋ? \)
2SG-catch.FACT 3PL.O PL-how.many
How many of them did you catch? (referring to fish)

(158) \( bā-māŋ \ \āwū? \)
PL-how.many come.FACT
How many came? (referring to people)

(159) \( bātōk \ nī \ ēnī \ kā-māŋ \)
TR.palmwine DEF allow.FACT TR-how.much
How much palmwine is left?

(160) \( w-āŋī \ \āllī \ \ā-māŋ \ \ādī \ \ēwūm \)
2SG-stay.FACT PL.days PIii-how.many LOC.village Wum
How many days did you stay in Wum?

3.4.2. \( rīŋ \ ‘which?’ / ‘who?’ \)

<50> For the question adjective *rīŋ* ‘which?’, the differentiation between singular and plural becomes relevant again. In the singular, the agreement marker is *ō*- (161). Different from the aforementioned targets, no differentiation is made between nouns that denote human or non-human beings. All nouns in the plural are referred to by *ērīŋ* (162) and (163).

(161) \( ō-rīŋ \ w-ōkū \)
SG-which 2SG-catch.FACT
Which one did you catch? (referring to fish)

(162) \( ē-rīŋ \ w-ōkū \)
PLi-which 2SG-catch.FACT
Which ones did you catch?

(163) \( ē-rīŋ \ ārō \ ūtīŋ \ ūwū \)
PLi-which be.FACT SG.own 2 SG.POSS
Which ones are your own? (referring to children)

<51> The same adjectival root is used to ask for ‘who?’, referring to several people (164) and (165). Even though agreement might have been the source of the *bā*- prefix, it is not indicated anymore in the interlinearization as singular and plural referents are distinguished by different roots (see below).

(164) \( bārīŋ \ áwū \ ámōŋ kīrī \ nī \)
who come.SUB here yesterday DEF
Who came here yesterday (knowing that there were many)?

(165) \( ārō \ bārīŋ \)
be.FACT who
Who are they?

<52> Asking for one person, a different question adjective, *ānīŋ* is employed (166) and (167).
Who came here yesterday?

Who is this?

It is remarkable that the same adjectival root nĩŋ is also used to create further question adjectives as kãnĩŋ ‘how?’ (168) and ēnĩŋ ‘what?’ (169). The interrogative adjective ēnĩŋ ‘what’ can only be used when asking for processes, not for things. ‘what is this?’ would be ȁn̄ ārō ēsĩŋ?.

How did you do it?

What did you do?

The usage of one root for different question adjectives could hint to a former elaborate agreement system that later developed into different question adjectives.

3.5. What happened to subject marking on verbs?

Verbs do not show agreement with the nominal subject in Bezen. However, all verbs in the finite form do show a prefixed thematic vowel that is not part of the root and might have been an agreement marker in former times (see also Prischnegg 2008: 178). The vocalic prefix has the form a-, ē-, or o-, which is mostly dependent on the quality of the verbal root. Roots containing unrounded vowels as /a/, /e/, /o/ or /i/ have either a- or ē- as prefix (170) and (171). Verbs containing a round vowel in the root in most cases will have an o- as prefix as V1 in (173), but sometimes also have an a- prefix as V2 in the same example. The vowel might change in order to mark 3pl, however, this is the only case and very predictable and would only show with verbs that do not bear a prefix /a/ anyway. The vowel seems to be semantically completely empty, but functions as a carrier of tones that indicate different TAM categories.

There is no problem.

They finished eating.

The man came down.

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7 The tone of the prefix vowel depends on modal features of the verb.
3.6. Conclusion noun class system

Which conclusion can be drawn from the described agreement phenomena? It is certain that the Bezen noun class system is highly disintegrated and unsystematic. It must once have been semantically motivated, but nowadays formality also plays a role in the determination of agreement morphemes. There is a tendency for head nouns denoting human beings to trigger a $bV$-agreement marker, while a noun denoting non-humans will ask for $i$-~$e$-as agreement morpheme. However, there are many exceptions, as nouns denoting non-humans might also trigger the $bV$-agreement marker, disregarding the semantics (173). Furthermore, there are nouns denoting animates and humans, bearing a $bV$-plural prefix, and triggering an $i$-~$e$-agreement marker in an adjective (174), but the $bV$-agreement in a numeral (175). The strangest case is where the same head noun triggers different agreement prefixes with different adjectives (176) and (177).

(173) $bētsìk$ $bā-ān$ two bananas
   PL.bananas PL.ii-two
(174) $bālîm$ $ē-tīn$ white men
   PL.men PL.i-white
(175) $bālîm$ $bā-ān$ two men
   PL.men PL.ii-two
(176) $bôlùlù$ $ē-kyùr$ small pigs
   PL.pig PL.i-small
(177) $bôlùlù$ $bë-wùr$ black pigs
   PL.pig PL.ii-black

Thus, the overall picture is blurred and does not allow the drawing of a sharp boundary between the classes. Anyanwu reports (personal communication) that Yukuben also has a ‘crazy’ noun class system, which gives hope that the lack of systematics in the Bezen noun class system is not only due to the author’s brain capacity. The scattered occurrence of the additional agreement morphemes $a$- and $ka$- hints at a formally more elaborated system of concordance in Bezen.

4. Derivation

The nominal prefixes described before are used to derive nouns from verbs and adjectives, by prefixing them to the verbal or adjectival root. A large number of derived nouns can be observed in the Bezen lexicon: Agentive and instrumental nouns are among them, but also action and state nouns. Furthermore nouns that denote the objects of actions or embodiments of qualities can be observed. However, the grouping of the nouns is often tentative and based on the interpretation of the author so that the categories should not be considered to be irrevocable.

4.1. Agentive nouns

Comrie & Thompson (2007: 336) characterize an agentive noun as a lexeme that denotes « one which ‘verbs’ ». In Bezen, the agentive noun $ūʒi$‘thief’ is derived from the motion verb $ʒi$‘to steal’ by prefixing $ū$-~/$bë$. Further agentive nouns are derived using a $kî$- prefix (178) – (180).

(178) $kàb$ follow $→$ $kìkìb$ / $èkìb$ younger sibling (“the follower”)
(179) $wùr$ refuse $→$ $kìwùr$ enemy (“the refuser”)
(180) $bôŋ$ roll $→$ $kìbôn$ $ēmì$ dung beetle (“roller of dung”)
4.2. Embodiment of quality

This group of derived nouns could be considered as a subsection of agentive nouns, except that the agents here are derived from stative verbs or adjectives, resulting in nouns that mean “sb. or sth. that is like that” (181) – (183). In the singular, the nouns bear the prefix ū- ~ ū-, in the plural, the prefix is bē- ~ bē- if the agent is human a) and ī- ~ ī- if it is non-human b).

(181) yī → ūyī a) bēyī b) īyī
new new one new ones (HUM) new ones (non-HUM)

(182) ? → ūlīm a) bēlīm b) īlīm
child children fresh ones (non-HUM)

(183) mān → ūmān a) bāmān b) īmān
red red one red ones (HUM) red ones (non-HUM)

Three more nouns belonging semantically into this group of nouns are derived by the prefixes bī-, kū- and kē- / ā- (184) – (186)⁸.

(184) wār glue → biwār glue (“something that sticks”)
(185) tām hide → kūtām secret (“something that is hidden”)
(186) kīb old → kēkīb / ākīb elder sibling (“the one that is old”)

4.3. Instrumental nouns

In Bezen, kV- prefixes are especially prominent in the creation of instrumental nouns (187) – (190). Three different instrumental nouns can be derived from the verb rēn ‘to sift’: ūrān / bērēn ‘basket’ and the nouns in example (187). ūrān is the only example in the corpus that employs the prefixes ū- / bē- for the derivation of an instrumental noun.

(187) rēn to sift/untie/thatch → kērēn / ārēn small basket for sifting
→ kīrēn palmwine filter
(188) hāk grind → kāhāk / āhāk upper part of a grinding stone
(189) gbūm open, uncover → kūgbūm / ēgbūm key, opener
(190) bīb break → kēbīb āhām sth. that breaks stones, f.e. hammer

4.4. State nouns

The group of state nouns contains by far the largest amount of nouns which can be derived from verbs (191) – (196), and adjectives (197) – (199). The prefixes bV- (191) – (195) and kV- (196) – (199) predominate here. The resulting nouns denote abstract qualities.

(191) līb be heavy → būlīb eaviness
(192) hyīm be sick → būhyīm illness
(193) tīn think → būtīn thought
(194) ūmān be lazy → bēmān lazyness
(195) tsīn burn → bōtsīn heat
(196) hām be mad → kēhām madness
(197) mān red → kīmān redness
(198) yū new → kīyū newness
(199) kyīr small → kēkyīr smallness

⁸ The root kīb ‘old’ can be used as an adjective, taking agreement morphemes, but also as a verb, bearing the vocalic prefix and tense/aspect markers.
4.5. Passive Nouns

Comrie and Thompson report from the Bantu language Si-Luyana, where nouns with a passive meaning can be derived from verbs (Comrie & Thompson 2007: 341; Givón 1970: 74ff.). However, Givón has doubts concerning these derived nouns and shows examples that back their verbal status (1970: 77). In Bezen, the derivations are clearly nouns with the meaning the «thing/person that is ‘verbed’» (Comrie & Thompson 2007: 341). In the derivation of passive nouns, kV- prefixes are prominent (202) and (203), few examples appear with the prefixes ī-/ bā- and ī-/ ī- (200) and (201). The noun kāsām ‘peeling’ could as well be interpreted as ‘the result of peeling’ (202).

(200) wān marry a man → īwān / bāwān husband (“the one who is married”)
(201) tīb pin → ītūb / ītīb spear (“the one which is pinned”)
(202) sām peel → kāsām / āsām peeling (“the one which is peeled”)
(203) būk die → kībʊ̀ kōhūn bird (sp.) (“the one which has been died with camwood”)

4.6. Derivation summarized

There is a large amount of derived nouns in Bezen and in several cases, different nouns can be derived from one verbal or adjectival root (see also example (187): The root lɨ̄b ‘be heavy’ opens two ways of derivation: in (204a), the prefix bū- creates a state noun referring to the quality of an object, while in b) bō- derives a noun that denotes a concrete embodiment of the quality. In (205a), an agentive noun is derived by the prefixes ī-/ bɛ̄-, while in (205b) the prefix bū- derives a state noun bearing an abstract meaning. The verb wān ‘marry a man’ allows the derivation of two nouns (206), the abstract concept of ‘marriage’, kīwān a) and the object of a marriage, the ‘husband’ īwān b). īwū ‘wife’ c) could be considered as the agent of the marriage but it would be the only case in Bezen, where the root of the verb loses a consonant in the derivation process. Similar to the previous example, the adjective mān ‘red’ (207) allows the derivation of a noun denoting an abstract concept a) and the agents of ‘redness’, here in the human b) and non-human form b).

(204) lɨb be heavy → a) būlɨb heaviness b) bōlɨb load
(205) ʒi steal → a) ǔzi / bɛ̄zi thief b) būzi theft
(206) wān marry → a) kīwān marriage b) īwān / bāwān husband
(207) mān red → a) kīmān redness b) ūmān / bámān the red one (+HUM)
(208) ādōn / bēdōn chief → kīdīn chiefdom
(209) īzān child → bōzān young animals
(210) īzēn ‘child’, which is a relational concept, does not mean ‘children’, but ‘young animals’. For ‘children’, the pluralic noun bēlīm is used, instead. The noun kīzēn ‘grandchild’, is derived from ‘child’ īzēn.

(211) uādōn / bēdōn chief → kīdīn chiefdom
(212) īzēn child → bōzēn young animals
(213) īzēn / īzēn ‘camwood’.

9 The bird has the colour of camwood; kōhūn ‘camwood’.

Furthermore, noun to noun derivation can be observed, even though to a smaller extent than verb to noun derivation. The abstract concept ‘chiefdom’ is derived from the noun ādōn ‘chief’ (208). The plural form of the noun īzēn ‘child’, which is a relational concept, does not mean ‘children’, but ‘young animals’. For ‘children’, the pluralic noun bēlīm is used, instead. The noun kīzēn ‘grandchild’, is derived from ‘child’ īzēn.

4.6. Derivation summarized

There is a large amount of derived nouns in Bezen and in several cases, different nouns can be derived from one verbal or adjectival root (see also example (187): The root lɨ̄b ‘be heavy’ opens two ways of derivation: in (204a), the prefix bū- creates a state noun referring to the quality of an object, while in b) bō- derives a noun that denotes a concrete embodiment of the quality. In (205a), an agentive noun is derived by the prefixes ī-/ bɛ̄-, while in (205b) the prefix bū- derives a state noun bearing an abstract meaning. The verb wān ‘marry a man’ allows the derivation of two nouns (206), the abstract concept of ‘marriage’, kīwān a) and the object of a marriage, the ‘husband’ īwān b). īwū ‘wife’ c) could be considered as the agent of the marriage but it would be the only case in Bezen, where the root of the verb loses a consonant in the derivation process. Similar to the previous example, the adjective mān ‘red’ (207) allows the derivation of a noun denoting an abstract concept a) and the agents of ‘redness’, here in the human b) and non-human form b).

(204) lɨb be heavy → a) būlɨb heaviness b) bōlɨb load
(205) ʒi steal → a) ǔzi / bɛ̄zi thief b) būzi theft
(206) wān marry → a) kīwān marriage b) īwān / bāwān husband
(207) mān red → a) kīmān redness b) ūmān / bámān the red one (+HUM)
(208) ādōn / bēdōn chief → kīdīn chiefdom
(209) īzēn child → bōzēn young animals
(210) īzēn / īzēn ‘camwood’.

9 The bird has the colour of camwood; kōhūn ‘camwood’.

Furthermore, noun to noun derivation can be observed, even though to a smaller extent than verb to noun derivation. The abstract concept ‘chiefdom’ is derived from the noun ādōn ‘chief’ (208). The plural form of the noun īzēn ‘child’, which is a relational concept, does not mean ‘children’, but ‘young animals’. For ‘children’, the pluralic noun bēlīm is used, instead. The noun kīzēn ‘grandchild’, is derived from ‘child’ īzēn.

(208) ādōn / bēdōn chief → kīdīn chiefdom
(209) īzēn child → bōzēn young animals
(210) īzēn / īzēn ‘camwood’.

9 The bird has the colour of camwood; kōhūn ‘camwood’.
5. Conclusion

Bezen nouns show a large variety of nominal prefixes that indicate SG and PL and which are not reflected in the agreement system. A tendency towards semantic grouping of nouns with similar prefixes can be observed. The agreement system is reduced to four classes, one SG and three PL classes. It seems as if agreement in Bezen used to be semantically motivated, differentiating between humans and non-humans. However, the system has disintegrated and nowadays formality also plays a role in the determination of agreement markers\(^\text{10}\). The prefixes are furthermore used to derive nouns from verbs and adjectives, with state nouns denoting abstract concepts being the most prominent outcome of derivation. The Bezen noun class system fits very well into the Southern Jukunoid noun class-pattern. The Bezen nominal prefixes are almost identical with those of Yukuben, which has retained a slightly more elaborated agreement system. This hints to a probably more complex former noun class system in Bezen that has been reduced either as part of the general tendency to decline of Benue-Congo noun class systems or as part of an overall, language-intern dismantling process.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>definitive marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUR</td>
<td>durative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACT</td>
<td>factitive n</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUM / +HUM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>non-HUM / -</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HUM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>object</td>
</tr>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLi</td>
<td>plural agreement inanimate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLii</td>
<td>plural agreement human and inanimate</td>
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<td>PLiii</td>
<td>plural agreement inanimate for ‘days’</td>
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<td>POSS</td>
<td>possessive</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular; singular agreement prefix</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUB</td>
<td>subordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>transnumeral, a noun that can be used as singular and plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(sp.)</td>
<td>species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 / V2</td>
<td>verb 1, verb 2 etc. in a multverb construction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{10}\) Givón concludes that for the development of the Bantu noun class system and states “what is now largely a system of ‘grammatical’ genders, was once a system of semantic classification of the noun universe” (1971: 34).
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